



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**New York Harbor School**

**High School 551**

**400 Irving Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11237**

**Principal: Nathan Dudley**

**Dates of review: April 7 - 8, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Diana Shepherd**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

New York Harbor School is a high school with 385 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 31% Black, 66% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 16.6% English language learners and 12.2% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 83.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 73% eligibility.

The school is currently located in Brooklyn and, with the support of Urban Assembly, has successfully secured a permanent home on Governor's Island. This is to enable the school to provide the full "harbor curriculum" without having to travel from Brooklyn to the Bronx River to work on the water.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has a strong vision, which drives the highly committed staff.
- The school makes good use of a wide range of data to measure students' progress and longer-term performance.
- The school has positive relationships with parents who appreciate the good communication and are confident that their children are safe at school.
- The curriculum is broad and links subjects through the harbor curriculum to offer a strong purpose for learning.
- The special education curriculum is exemplary and provides an excellent model of instruction for all teachers.
- Effective collaboration empowers teachers to develop new ideas and share good practice, which supports the development of an integrated curriculum
- The school is effective at providing levels of personal challenge, which build confidence and self-esteem for students.
- The school is successful at communicating high expectations as exemplified by the number of students accepted at the college of their choice.
- The school has built excellent relationships with partners who provide good financial, strategic and academic support.

### What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all strategic plans for the improvement of student outcomes include measurable interim goals.
- Improve teacher outcomes by establishing clear standards and setting goals with measurable interim benchmarks.
- Build upon the existing practice to develop consistently differentiated instruction.
- Ensure that all students attend regularly and are punctual.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### **Progress made since the last review**

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

### **Overall Evaluation**

#### **This school is proficient.**

The New York Harbor School is a rapidly improving school, demonstrated by the good progress since the last Quality Review. Although consistently differentiated instruction is not yet evident, the school has developed good strategies to promote and improve this aspect of its work. The leadership has created strong teams that are now beginning to drive the curriculum development in line with the vision for the school. They use assessment and performance data with increasing accuracy to set goals and monitor progress. As a result, all groups of students made very good progress last year and test results improved significantly. The number of students accepted into college also increased. The inquiry team is contributing to the school's understanding of low achievement through a well-planned study. The school does not yet have access to Acuity. The school has put good systems in place, which it has not yet had enough time to embed and demonstrate sustained impact. It has a strong focus on developing students' confidence and self-esteem that is central to the positive relationships between staff and students. Students know that the school has high expectations and respond very well. One student commented, "Class work is only hard if you make it so!" They enjoy and appreciate the wide range of activities and develop excellence in areas such as swimming and diving. They trust the adults and feel safe. Parents also feel engaged and value what the school does for their children. Teachers understand their accountability and welcome opportunities to work collaboratively to build the curriculum and learn new skills. The impact of the strategies employed throughout the past two years is starting to affect progress. Planning is becoming more systematic and measured. Students often enter the school well below grade level and are leaving with excellent results and interesting futures. Despite good systems to ensure all students attend school regularly, there are still too many who fail to comply.

The school will be moving to its new home on Governor's Island in just over one year.

### **How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria**

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school keeps a comprehensive overview of the achievement data for all students from a wide range of tests and assessments. The departments in the school use data

with increasing effectiveness to analyze achievement and to inform curriculum design. Special education students and English language learners, in particular, have benefited from the scrutiny of this data. In each department, teachers have identified barriers to learning which they have successfully addressed. As a result, both groups make good progress in their learning and the graduation rate for English language learners is now higher than the rest of the school. The analysis of data has identified some underachieving groups, in particular the African American boys. Awareness of this underperformance led to further analysis, which has identified the impact of social and emotional factors on learning and inspired further research and planning. The school is developing its capacity to use data to understand the value added to students' performance over time. Many students come in below grade level and leave well above. It does not yet have a clear understanding of the reasons for both success and failure to support whole school planning further.

The specific nature of the curriculum makes the identification of similar schools difficult. However, the principal has carefully chosen schools with similar students and structures to benchmark progress against, and outcomes have been favorable. The teachers and administrators have had training in the use of data, and plan for focused training on Acuity, which is not currently available to the school. There is scope for further training to enhance the capacity of both teachers and leaders to systematize the use of data to inform strategic development.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The lead teachers for each advisory group coordinate the goals for students in their charge. Teachers, however, do not consistently implement this practice. As a result, instruction does not always clearly align with student needs, which can affect progress. Grades 11 and 12 teachers have developed a good model, which ensures that the goals set for students are rigorous and consistent. The administration has plans for the whole school to adopt this procedure. The population of special education students is growing and the special education department is very thorough in their analysis of needs. This analysis informs the goals set by teachers in charge of the advisory groups. Consultation with academic intervention services is thorough and ensures students that get the support to meet their goals. Students who perform just below grade level get additional instruction from the English coach. As a result, more students make the grade.

Communication is developing well at the school and the administration keeps teachers informed through short daily briefings, regularly updated information boards and displays, which relate to goals and achievements. Because of this, teachers feel valued and their commitment to the school is high. There is a collaborative culture, which supports the flow of information between departments. Parents report that communication is good. They appreciate the school's high expectations for their children and support the focus on improving academic levels. Specifically, they like phone calls relating to attendance, and are very satisfied that their children are safe at all times in school whatever the activity.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The integration of the harbor and core curricula is a work in progress. Students have opportunities to learn and to practice complex skills in a real context. These opportunities are highly motivating. However, the school is not yet planning in sufficient detail for this broad curriculum to support achievement within the core areas in order to ensure that there is an effective balance between the two elements. The English language arts and math curricula are broadly traditional.

Practical and hands-on learning bring science to life and the focus on maritime issues is highly motivating. Last year, the analysis of Regents test data resulted in both scheduling and staffing changes. As a result, interim evidence shows improvements in the achievement of many out-achieving students. The English department has mapped the curriculum, ensuring coverage and progression across the grades. Collaboration with the social studies department ensures purposeful contexts for writing and builds inter-departmental understanding of standards. Through harbor curriculum electives, students can aspire to become marine biologists or architects and begin to learn the skills required while in school. They are able to achieve practical qualifications or licenses needed to work in the harbor when they graduate. This offers direct employment opportunities as an alternative to college. Some students have already followed this course but many others have chosen college and been successful in their applications. The school offers a rigorous college readiness course, which helps all students to succeed with their applications to college. This is a highly effective strategy and the numbers of students accepted into college is growing year after year.

The principal and the assistant principal observe all teachers and give written feedback. The assistant principal frequently uses email, responding to issues observed during walkthroughs. Teachers respond well to the value this gives to their work. Differentiated instruction is, however, an issue across the school. In the special education classroom, differentiation is exemplary and the teacher works with other teachers to develop a consistent approach. As teachers use data to inform their instruction and look closely at each student's learning, their understanding of differentiation improves. Attendance is a big issue for the school, and a senior teacher leads the group of professionals responsible for making improvements. Their approach is systematic and rigorous, based on data to inform their actions, but too many students still do not attend school regularly. Parents contribute well to this process and appreciate the school's efforts.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school is small and administration works closely with the staff to develop their strengths although teachers do not yet have individual goals. However, observations inform the professional development program very effectively in order to improve whole

school issues relating to the quality of instruction, such as differentiation. Supporting teachers to improve the outcomes for reading and writing has been the main priority for this year. The coaches have been instrumental in this and it is evident across the curriculum that instruction in these areas is becoming more consistent. They have identified an enhanced focus on co-instruction as the next step, as this model has been successful particularly with English language learners. Teachers recognize the value of departmental weekend retreats as a vehicle for focused professional discussion, and interdepartmental retreats are proposed in order to align the curriculum overall. The school supports new teachers very well.

The teachers responsible for advisory groups allocate academic services and guidance to students. They ensure that ensure that the planning for vulnerable students is both timely and sensitive. The well-respected dean promotes a culture of mutual respect. Boundaries are set clearly and the consequences of negative behavior detailed. Because of this highly personalized program, the number of suspensions has fallen. Excellent partnerships support curriculum development and bring in extra funding. They have enabled the school to build its curriculum according to its vision and to be generous in the allocation of staff and resources, which support the academic focus. Excellent relationships with colleges support the college preparation program very well and other partnerships enable the intern program to flourish.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

Overall, strategic plans are becoming more thorough. However, at present the school does not have clear measurable goals in place for students or teachers. Therefore, administration cannot judge the effectiveness of the strategies in place to bring about improvements. The assistant principal has introduced a planning system, which includes interim goals for students in the upper grades and plans to use it across the whole school as a positive development. The lack of timely performance measures for teachers is inhibiting the urgency of the management of change and particularly the planning for differentiated instruction. The school does not have access to Acuity to support its analysis of achievement and help with planning to address deficits in skills and concept. Currently, teacher assessment and an independent data system provide the information needed for analysis. The administration is using its analysis of all available data to drive their planning process. This year the school has used the Quality Review process well and intends to use the framework again next year. The process to complete the self-evaluation was thorough and collaborative, which the principal judges to have been very useful.

The principal works in an open and transparent way with all the groups in the school to build the school's vision. He is very accessible and supportive to students and families. The teams around him have come on board because they share his vision for learning, specifically the focus on learning in the real environment and the entitlement of all students to a college education.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

|  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>SCHOOL NAME: New York Harbor School</b> | Δ | ▷ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
| <b>Quality Score</b>                       |   |   | X |   |   |

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.**

| <b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .</b>   | Δ | ▷ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?   |   |   |   | X |   |
| 1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?   |   |   |   | X |   |
| 1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?  |   |   |   | X |   |
| 1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?    |   |   |   | X |   |
| 1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?                       |   |   | X |   |   |
| 1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?  |   |   |   | X |   |
| 1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students? |   |   | X |   |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>  |   |   |   | X |   |

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.**

| <b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .</b>   | Δ | ▷ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?                             |   |   | X |   |   |
| 2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?           |   |   | X |   |   |
| 2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?  |   |   | X |   |   |
| 2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?   |   |   | X |   |   |
| 2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?   |   |   |   | X |   |
| 2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve? |   |   |   | X |   |
| 2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?                                    |   |   |   | X |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>  |   |   | X |   |   |

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

| <b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>  | Δ | ▷ | ✓ | + | ◇ |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?   |   |   | X |   |   |
| 3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?   |   |   |   | X |   |
| 3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment? |   |   |   | X |   |
| 3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?                                    |   |   | X |   |   |
| 3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?  |   |   |   | X |   |
| 3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?   |   |   |   | X |   |
| 3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?   |   |   | X |   |   |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>   |   |   | X |   |   |

| <b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>                |          |          |          |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>  | <b>Δ</b> | <b>➤</b> | <b>✓</b> | <b>+</b> | <b>◇</b> |
| 4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?   |          |          | X        |          |          |
| 4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?   |          |          |          | X        |          |
| 4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment? |          |          |          | X        |          |
| 4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?  |          |          |          | X        |          |
| 4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?   |          |          |          | X        |          |
| 4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?   |          |          |          | X        |          |
| 4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?   |          |          |          | X        |          |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>   |          |          |          |          | X        |

| <b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b> |          |          |          |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>To what extent do . . .</b>   | <b>Δ</b> | <b>➤</b> | <b>✓</b> | <b>+</b> | <b>◇</b> |
| 5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?  |          |          | X        |          |          |
| 5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?  |          |          | X        |          |          |
| 5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?   |          |          | X        |          |          |
| 5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?   |          |          | X        |          |          |
| 5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?                                    |          |          | X        |          |          |
| 5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?  |          |          | X        |          |          |
| 5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?   |          |          |          | X        |          |
| <b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>   |          |          |          |          | X        |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| ◇ | <b>Outstanding</b>                             |
| + | <b>Well Developed</b>                          |
| ✓ | <b>Proficient</b>                              |
| ➤ | <b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b> |
| Δ | <b>Underdeveloped</b>                          |